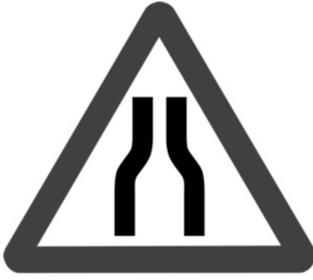


A Limit or a Target?



Many more vehicles seem to be using Charlynch Lane/Road these days; maybe in an effort to avoid the huge queues of traffic at the numerous road works in Bridgwater at peak hours. So **has** it become a rat run used by “out-of-area” drivers focussed on getting to their destination quickly but who are not familiar with driving on single-track lanes? As a resident living in Charlynch Lane/Road, I have become concerned with the increasing number of cars, vans and motorcyclists travelling at high speed in either direction along our single-track lane between Four Forks and the new small roundabout on the A39.

Although Charlynch Lane/Road has a posted national speed limit (60 mph) it doesn't mean to say that it is **safe** to drive at that speed and it certainly shouldn't be seen as a **target** to be achieved. Our lane is used by cyclists, walkers, dog walkers, horse riders –and pets! It has some straight sections; it has many blind bends (ones you cannot see around due to hedgerows); it is a residential lane where driveways from properties emerge onto the lane; along one section, front doors of houses open onto the public highway and it is inconceivable that some drivers may think that its okay to travel at speed directly in front of houses and driveways simply because the legal speed limit is 60mph!

All of that said, every road has two speed limits; there is the **posted** speed limit and there is the **safe** speed limit and the two can be very different! The latter is determined by the driver based on the circumstances and conditions and in my humble view that is where the problem lies. Some drivers (not all!) aren't able to judge what the safe driving speed is for a given road (they may not even give it any thought) and perhaps will believe that if a road is posted as 60mph, then it must be okay to drive up to that speed. This is a dangerous belief; dangerous both to the driver and to other road users. As a member of the Institute of Advanced Motoring I believe in safe driving; I train drivers to pass the IAM's Advanced Driving Test thus promoting road safety across Somerset.

Drivers travelling too fast are breaking a “golden rule” of motoring; ***you should always drive at a speed that will allow you to stop safely in the distance you can see to be clear on your side of the road.*** BUT on a single track road such as Charlynch Lane/Road you should be able to stop safely in **half the distance** you can see to be clear because an oncoming vehicle directly in your path will be using the other half. Good drivers will observe and anticipate hazards when judging what the safe speed is, for example by taking into account a driveway or entrance to a house from where a car or pedestrians might emerge and so will adjust speed accordingly ready to stop safely if needs be.

I wonder if any attempt has been made to have the speed limit reduced to a more sensible 30 mph along the length of Charlynch Lane/Road?

I have seen some close calls in the lane, all of which come down to driver error. On a recent occasion I was approaching a blind bend along Charlynch Road and heard a car approaching from the other side; as I slowed to a stop in order to reverse to a passing place just behind me, a high powered car came out of the bend so fast that the driver had to do an emergency brake stopping just inches from the front of my car. Had I been travelling any faster than a couple of miles an hour at that stage, it would undoubtedly have been a head-on collision. The look of terror on the driver's face and on that of his passenger said it all; seemingly they hadn't expected to meet anything coming the other way. As I tucked my car into the passing place, the driver put his foot down again....no apology...no gratitude shown.

A week before Christmas 2014, Minnie, our 5yr old cat was killed outside our front gate by a driver who didn't bother to stop; they either failed to look or couldn't react in time due to excessive speed. We found her seconds later and it was very upsetting to see our family pet lying dead on the grass verge.

Of course, there are other residential lanes around our area which have the national speed limit posted. Maybe residents there have similar experiences. So am I alone or are there others who share my concern? More to the point, what can we do about it???

Andrew, Charlynch Lane